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LEBANON

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A. LAND AND PEOPLE

1. In the absence of official statistics, the population of Lebanon is estimated at slightly over 3 million, living on a territory of 10,452 square kilometres in area.

2. The annual income per capita is estimated at US$ 2,150. Although there are no exact accounting figures available, the gross national product is estimated at US$ 6.2 billion.

3. The annual rate of inflation was 32.95 per cent in 1991. Since 1984 the country has experienced galloping inflation, which reached a peak in October 1992. In 1984 the US dollar was worth 6.51 Lebanese pounds; its average worth during 1992 was 1,700 pounds, and at times its value reached 2,600 or 2,700 pounds (the rate of inflation for 1992 was 130 per cent). However, the national currency rallied considerably the day after the formation of the present government on 21 October 1992 and since then has remained remarkably stable (prices fell by 2 per cent during the first quarter of 1993).

4. The external debt stood at US$ 520 million in 1980 (World Bank, World Development Report, 1992), and internal public debt at US$2,290,000,000 (Banque Audi - Liban, Quarterly Economic Report, 1st quarter 1992).

5. The rate of unemployment was estimated at 23 per cent in 1988 - 38 per cent among men and 9 per cent women (statistics provided by the League of Arab States and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) 1989).

6. The adult literacy rate is estimated very approximately at 80.1 per cent - 87.8 per cent for men and 73.1 per cent for women (UNESCO, 1991).

7. The inhabitants of Lebanon belong to one of the officially recognized religious communities in the country. The size of each community is reflected in the number of seats to which each is entitled in the Chamber of Deputies under the electoral legislation currently in force (Act No. 154 of 22 July 1992). By law, the 128 seats in the Parliament are shared as follows:

Muslims	
Sunnites	27
Shiites	27
Druzes	8
Alawites	2
Christians	
Maronites	34
Greek Catholics (Melchites)	8
Greek Orthodox	14
Protestants	1
Armenian Catholics	1
Armenian Orthodox	5
Minorities	1
Total	128

8. The Lebanese mother tongue is Arabic, which is also the official language; but French and English are also taught in the schools.

9. According to 1986 statistics (UNICEF, 1988) the average life expectancy at birth was 67 years (65 for men and 69 for women).

10. The mortality rate among children under age 5 was 43 per 1,000 in 1990. The rate appears to have fallen in 1993. The infant mortality rate (children under age 1) is 38 per 1,000 (UNICEF, Beirut).

11. The maternal mortality rate was 200 per 100,000 live births in 1988 (UNDP, Human development report 1989).

12. The fertility rate (the average number of children born per woman) is 3.7 (UNICEF, Beirut, 1990).

13. In 1988, 42.6 per cent of the population was under 15 years of age, 52.3 per cent between ages 15 and 64 and 5.1 per cent over age 65 (statistics of the League of Arab States, ESCWA); 84 per cent of the population lives in the urban areas as against 16 per cent in the rural areas (1990 statistics, UNDP, 1992).

14. In 1988-1990 women made up 27.2 per cent of the total labour force (UNDP, 1992).

B. GENERAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE

15. Immediately following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, Lebanon was placed under French mandates (Category A) by the League of Nations. In 1926 Lebanon adopted a parliamentary-type republican constitution. It gained independence in 1943.

16. Lebanon is a founding member of the League of Arab States and of the United Nations. In 1949 it signed the Israeli-Lebanese General Armistice Agreement under United Nations auspices and in implementation of a Security Council decision. In 1958 it experienced its first internal crisis, brought on by the incidents in the region which began with the Suez War in 1956 but it quickly recovered and resumed its economic expansion. However, shortly afterwards it had to face the impact of the Palestine problem and the arrival of new waves of Palestinian refugees.

17. Since 1975 Lebanon has experienced a series of armed conflicts fanned by foreign intervention. The Arab summits of Riyadh and Cairo (1976) decided to send an Arab peace-keeping force to Lebanon, which was soon to consist exclusively of Syrian forces.

18. In 1978 the Israeli army invaded southern Lebanon. Security Council resolution 425 of 19 March 1978 called for strict respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon and demanded the withdrawal of the Israeli forces. The Council also decided to establish the United Nations Interim Force in southern Lebanon.

19. Lebanese territory was again invaded by Israel in June 1982. The Security Council then adopted resolution 509 of 6 June 1982, which demanded that Israel withdraw all its military forces forthwith and unconditionally to the internationally recognized boundaries of Lebanon. But on 3 August 1982 Israeli troops entered the capital, Beirut.

20. In December 1983, between 3,000 and 4,000 armed elements of the Palestine Liberation Organization left Lebanon by sea.

21. Following the non-ratification by the Lebanese Government of the agreement signed on 17 May 1983 with Israel, the Israeli army withdrew from part of the territories which it occupied, but without coordinating that withdrawal with the Lebanese army. Fighting broke out in the evacuated regions and massacres were committed, causing the mass displacement of large numbers of the inhabitants of those regions.

22. On 22 October 1989 the Lebanese deputies met in the town of Taif, in Saudi Arabia, and adopted a document of national understanding which included political, administrative, economic, social, educational and military provisions and established a special relationship with Syria.

23. The political structure of the Lebanese Republic is as follows:

24. The executive authority consists of the ministers (currently 30 in number) and of the President of the Republic and the President of the Council of Ministers, who are joint heads of the executive. The President of the Republic is elected for six years by the Chamber of Deputies. He has no policy-making responsibilities. He may chair meetings of the Council of Ministers without the right to vote. He promulgates laws, ratifies treaties (with the consent of the Head of Government) and signs decrees, which are counter-signed by the latter and by the minister concerned. He may, after giving prior notice to the Council of Ministers, refer legislation back to the Chamber of Deputies for a second reading and may also call upon the Council of Ministers to dissolve the Chamber if it declines to meet or rejects the budget in its entirety.

25. The President of the Council of Ministers is appointed by the President of the Republic in consultations with the President of the Chamber of Deputies and following consultations with the deputies themselves (the latter are mandatory).

26. The executive power is vested in the Council of Ministers as a collegiate body. Ministers may be chosen from among the deputies. The Government is politically accountable to the Chamber of Deputies and has the right to propose legislation, as has the Chamber itself.

27. The legislature consists of a single chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, which is composed of 128 members elected for four years by universal suffrage. The President and Vice-President of the Chamber, who are elected by the deputies, also serve for four-year terms.

28. The judiciary is independent. It is composed of the courts of first instance, the courts of appeal and a Court of Cassation, which has separate civil and criminal branches. An independent Council of State examines appeals for the annulment of administrative acts on grounds of illegality and proceedings brought to establish government liability.

29. In addition, a High Court has been established to conduct trials of presidents and ministers.

30. A constitutional council is being set up, in accordance with the constitutional amendment of 21 September 1990 (art. 19).

C. GENERAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH HUMAN RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED

31. All treaties duly ratified by Lebanon acquire mandatory force of law within the country simply by virtue of the exchange of instruments of ratification (in the case of bilateral treaties) or upon the deposit of the instruments of ratification or accession (in the case of multilateral treaties). No further procedure is required for their incorporation into internal legislation. The provisions of those treaties which are sufficiently specific and concrete will therefore be immediately applied. Provisions which call for legislative or statutory measures are binding on the State of Lebanon, which must then introduce such measures.

32. On 3 November 1972 Lebanon deposited the instruments of accession to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It is therefore expected to adopt the legislative, regulatory and practical measures required by these two Covenants.

33. The authorities with competence in the field of human rights are the Chamber of Deputies, the Council of Ministers, the Ministries of Justice, the Interior, Public Health, Social Affairs, Labour, National Education, Youth and Sports, Culture and Higher Education, the Environment, Education, Habitat and Cooperatives and Displaced Persons; the National Social Security Fund; the municipalities; the Department of the Public Prosecutor (Procurator-General at the Court of Cassation); the Council of State; the Constitutional Council (in the process of being set up); and the Economic and Social Council, the establishment of which is provided for in the Taif agreement (document of national understanding).

34. Any person who claims that his rights have been violated has remedies available to him in the ordinary or criminal courts, depending on the circumstances. If the violation of the rights has been caused by the State or its representatives, he may make an administrative complaint to the Minister involved or an application to the Council of State for the annulment of the decision impugned or in order to obtain redress. He may also make application to a deputy, who will intervene to the extent of his powers.

35. If the violation stems from unconstitutional legislation, a petition of unconstitutionality may be made, pursuant to article 19 of the Constitution, as amended by the Constitutional Act No. 18 of 21 September 1990, through the President of the Republic, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, the president of the Council of Ministers or any 10 deputies. Similarly, the heads of the religious communities recognized by the law may bring before the Constitutional Council any matters involving personal status, religious and cultural freedoms, and the freedom of religious education.